



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, James L. Streeter, and Elissa T. Wright.

Tuesday, January 24, 2006

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Scott, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright
Members Absent: Councilor Sheets

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent noted the tax study from Senator Cook was distributed to Councilors.

4. Approval of Minutes

2006-0024 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole of January 10, 2006 and January 12, 2006 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

6. NEW BUSINESS

2006-0025 Joint Meeting with City Council (2006 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Present from the City of Groton were Mayor Popp, Hubert Poppe, David Hale, Paul Duarte, and Marian Galbraith

City Mayor Dennis Popp updated the Town Council on highlights of the draft Thames Street Study.

Discussion then turned to the paving program in the City. Mayor Popp noted the streets scheduled for paving, and four particularly bad roads (Pleasant Street, Latham Street, Slocum Terrace, and Fort Street). Mayor Popp noted the major roads that will need repaving in the future. Mayor Watson asked if the City streets are part of the Town's pavement management program and Mayor Popp stated no, the costs are included in the City's annual operating budget. Councilor Bond asked if the City outsources paving and Mayor Popp answered yes, with patching

done by the City. Councilor Bond asked if the Town has ever been approached to bid on the paving in the City and Mr. Popp stated he would check. Mayor Watson complimented the City on its sidewalk construction, and Mayor Popp noted that the City does not have enough people to do work outside the City.

The group discussed the 225th Anniversary of the Battle of Fort Griswold. Mayor Popp noted a committee has been meeting for about six months; Director of Parks and Recreation John Silsby has been attending. The committee meets the third Wednesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at the Monument House. On Labor Day weekend, there will be a reenactment including the burning of New London, crossing of river, and the Battle of Fort Griswold involving 1000 reenactors. The City may need support for the Saturday night dinner, which will feed up to 3,000 people. Mayor Popp suggested the City and Town work on promoting this event together. Town Manager Oefinger noted the Town has earmarked \$10,000 for the effort.

Mayor Popp noted the bathroom bids for Fort Griswold have been opened and are below state estimates so the bathrooms should be constructed soon.

Mayor Popp stated he will present a level service budget for City highway and police. There will be no new programs and no increase in paving funding.

Councilor Bond asked about the planner situation. Mayor Popp noted that no additional hours have been provided by the Town. The City advertised for a planner once, but now Mayor Popp is rewriting the job description and planning to readvertise for the position.

Mayor Popp noted the City of Groton is purchasing the Costa property as recommended in a study, but there are no plans at this time to expand the sewage treatment plant.

The next joint meeting was scheduled for May 8th at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall. Councilor Wright would like to talk about protecting water supply watershed areas.

The Committee recessed at 7:32 p.m. and reconvened at 7:43 p.m.

2005-0317

FYE 2005 CAFR

Recommended for a Resolution

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo reviewed the state requirements that lead to the publication of the CAFR document. Mr. Pandolfo reviewed the introductory section of the document. Vanessa Rossitto of Blum, Shapiro & Company reviewed the financial section of the document. Mr. Pandolfo then reviewed the various financial statements and schedules. Ms. Rossitto reviewed the state and federal audit reports.

A motion was made by Councilor Wright, seconded by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., to recommend a resolution accepting the FYE 2005 CAFR.

The motion carried unanimously.

2005-0311

FYE 2007 Budget

Discussed

Discussion followed on possible dates for the budget public hearing. Town Manager Oefinger asked Councilors to look at their calendars and let the Town Manager's Office know of their availability so that a budget schedule can be developed.

2005-0301

Council Goalsetting

Discussed

Mayor Watson suggested a special meeting to discuss this item and the Committee concurred.

2006-0028

Tercentennial Legacy Playground

Recommended for a Resolution

Director of Parks and Recreation John Silsby provided background on the proposed construction of an inclusive playground that would be unique to the Groton community. Mr. Silsby reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on the project and noted the key supporters. The concept is to provide a legacy for the Town's Tercentennial and the parking will help the Town continue to be a proactive leader in the area of inclusion.

Program Supervisor for Special Needs Eileen Cicchese described the concept of inclusion. The total cost for the project is \$350,160. Mr. Silsby outlined proposed funding including fundraising ideas. He then reviewed the site selection process, which identified Poquonnock Plains Park. He assured the Council that the Town will work with neighbors of the Park. Mr. Silsby briefly reviewed equipment selection. The proposed timeline for the project involves fundraising in 2006 and early 2007, with work starting in spring 2007. The project can be done in phases, depending of available funding.

Councilor Bartinik asked if the fundraising could be done before the Town is approached for funding. Mr. Silsby noted that he would like to use the Tercentennial funds as seed money and to create this legacy. Councilor Bartinik asked what would happen to the Sutton Park playground. Mr. Silsby noted that nothing will happen to it unless it becomes unsafe and he explained that it is a totally different playground than this proposal. Councilor Bartinik asked how this equipment is different from the equipment in other playgrounds and how it serves handicap persons. Manager of Recreational Services Jerry Lokken noted that there is value in the old type of play equipment, but it utilizes a series of ramps. Inclusionary equipment is ground based and allows disabled persons to approach the equipment the same as any other person. It puts children at the same level in eye contact with each other; everyone starts at the same place. This is a subtle, but important difference designed to foster inclusion. Councilor Bartinik does not feel the equipment is unique and he suggested that the playground is being labeled as a handicap playground to procure funding, but it is no different than other playground.

Mr. Lokken explained that inclusion doesn't mean just putting people together in the same place. It also involves emotional, psychological, and social aspects that allow people of all abilities to come together. Ms. Cicchese noted that ramped playgrounds do not allow children to interact with each other. Inclusive and handicap accessible are two different things.

Councilor Bond would support using the \$28,000 in Tercentennial funds. She asked about the cost to maintain the park. Director of Human Services Marge Fondulas noted that the surfacing has been chosen as recommended by experts in the field and that surface would need to be refurbished at some point. Councilor Bond recommended that a fund be set up to maintain the park. Ms. Fondulas added that the equipment was chosen because of its durability and weather-resistance.

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the group is looking for Council support of the concept. There has been money for neighborhood parks placed in the CIP for years, and this is just one possible use for the funds. He suggested that a discussion take place about each piece of equipment to hear what benefits there are to a disabled person. The intent is not to label the playground and build a "run of the mill" playground, but to create an inclusionary playground for all residents.

Councilor Streeter noted that "inclusion" is important. He raised a handicapped daughter and it is difficult to take a handicapped child to a playground and involve them. He expressed support for the fundraising attempt and stated that the Council should support the concept. With respect to Town funding, Councilor Streeter stated the Town should contribute as much as it can afford.

Councilor Bartinik asked if this area of Poquonnock Plains Park is used by anyone else and if the playground will be mobbed during big events. Mr. Silsby responded that the park is designed to

draw people to it and there is no specific use there at this time. The track in that area will remain in place.

Councilor Wright asked about the ongoing impact on the budget for maintenance. Mr. Silsby noted that he does not have an exact figure at this time. The park will require maintenance as other facilities do, but it is built to last. Ms. Cicchese noted that the equipment has been used in other locations for years, and each piece has been handpicked and reviewed for accessibility.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to recommend a resolution to build the playground using existing funds from accounts 32600 and 73320 (\$28,000) and continue to look for external funding sources.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to amend the motion to indicate that the Town Council supports the concept of the Tercentennial Legacy Playground.

The motion to amend carried unanimously.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0029

Mystic Academy Parklet Playscape

Recommended for a Resolution

Mayor Watson briefly outlined the proposal to relocate a playscape from Freeman Hathaway to the Mystic Academy Parklet. Councilor Bond asked why the playscape cannot be used at the new school on the Freeman Hathaway site. Town Manager Oefinger noted that it would have to be moved, and there are two distinct playscapes required for an elementary school and this one doesn't meet either state requirement. Additionally, the playscape must be removed in about a month and a half and then stored for a year and half. The playscape was originally intended for summer playground use, not school use.

Director of Parks and Recreation John Silsby explained that the playground at the Mystic Academy site must be removed because it is unsafe. A new playscape would draw children into the area. Councilor O'Beirne noted there is no parking in the area so effectively the only people who would use it would be within walking distance. He suggested that the Town explore accessing a parking area owned by the utility company that is currently chained.

Town Manager Oefinger reminded the Council that two years ago replacement of the Mystic Academy playscape was proposed, but the Council and RTM cut the funding. This has been an issue for a number of years. This proposal, for under \$20,000 out of current operating funds, will result in a new playscape at the parklet. A new playscape would cost twice as much.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., to recommend a resolution authorizing relocation of the Freeman Hathaway playscape to the Mystic Academy Parklet.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Scott, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Bond

The Committee recessed at 9:12 p.m. and reconvened at 9:25 p.m.

2004-0328

Bus Ordinance - Update

Not Discussed

2006-0016

Broadwater Liquefied Natural Gas Proposal

Discussed

Discussion took place on whether or not to have a presentation by Broadwater and opponents. Town Manager Oefinger suggested that staff put together information for the next meeting.

7. **Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List**

None

8. **OTHER BUSINESS**

None

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Councilor Bartinik, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adjourn at 9:43 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.